

# **Time to “*UpGrade*” Mississippi Education**

**By: Governor Haley Barbour**

For too long Mississippi has focused only on education funding and not education fundamentals. It is time to upgrade Mississippi's approach to educating our children.

The following are my “UpGrade” education reform proposals which have passed the Mississippi Senate and await consideration in the House. You can review them yourself at [www.governorbarbour.com/education](http://www.governorbarbour.com/education).

## **UpGrade: Put Teaching First**

Implement the final installment of the teacher pay raise package -- an 8% across-the-board raise for our teachers during the 2005-2006 school year.

Include financial rewards in future pay raises for all faculty and administrators when their school demonstrates a high rate of gain for student performance.

Recruit teachers in hard-to-staff subjects like math and science by authorizing the use of state dollars for additional pay.

## **UpGrade: Student Discipline**

Promote more mentoring to new teachers on discipline issues. Set a goal of 1000 new mentors for Mississippi's schools, with an extra focus on middle schools, where discipline problems are the worst.

Increase the enforceability of holding a parent accountable in the discipline process. If a parent refuses to participate in a timely manner in parent-teacher conferences due to their child's discipline problem a misdemeanor, they should be punished by increased fines, community service, or mandated attendance with their child in the

classroom (current law is rarely enforced due to a lack of a time element).

## **Upgrade: Liberate Successful Schools**

Exempt Mississippi's highest performing schools, designated as Level 4 and 5, from all the process standards required by the State Department of Education's policy manual, as long as they maintain their high level of achievement.

Grant "Home Rule" to high-performing school districts (combined average ranking of all schools of at least Level 4), allowing these districts to be legally able to pursue their own education interests, unless the law expressly prohibits it.

Allow the State Department of Education to focus its resources and assistance on fewer schools, the ones which need the most help: Level 1, 2 and 3 schools in Mississippi.

Expand Mississippi's charter school law, which has been labeled the most restrictive in the nation, so local communities will be free to develop schools of learning tailored to their own needs.

## **Upgrade: Efficient Use of Resources**

Provide more transparency in education budgeting by itemizing all of the variables and add-ons of the MAEP district allocation and making it available to the public.

Give local school districts the express legal authority and encouragement to privatize local services to save funds.

## **Upgrade: Redesign High School**

Establish the goal of making it possible for every student who desires to do so to earn a semester's worth of college credit in high school, saving Mississippi's parents thousands of dollars in tuition, and

increasing the academic rigor of the senior year for Mississippi students.

Insist that by the 2007-2008 school year, all public school 10th graders have free access to taking the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT -- a nationally-recognized test used to measure students' ability to succeed in Advanced Placement classes).

Insist that Mississippi take advantage of federal funding to train Advance Placement teachers and utilize online AP instruction so that, by the 2007-2008 school year, all districts can offer their students Advanced Placement tests in core subject areas (at no cost to disadvantaged students).

## **Upgrade: Early Childhood Development**

Move child care centers to offer more learning opportunities by requiring an educational component if a center is to receive the highest reimbursement in state funding through the Department of Human Services for Child Care Certificates.

Develop a quality rating scale for childcare centers, based on an easy-to-understand star system, which would be implemented immediately and posted for parents. Also, give the Department of Human Services the responsibility for child care licensing to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the reformed tiered reimbursement and quality rating system.

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